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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Eleventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 192nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 January 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. TALLAWY

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

WAYS AND MEANS OF IMPLEMENTING ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

WAYS AND MEANS OF EXPEDITING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

1. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU said that the Committee might wish to consider how the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in June 1992 in Brazil, would deal with women's concerns. Overpopulation, in connection with which women's behaviour was of obvious import, was one of the major problems affecting the environment.

2. Ms. EVATT proposed that the meeting should suspend to enable the Working Groups to begin consideration of their programmes of work.

3. Ms. GONZALEZ-MARTINEZ said that the Conference on Environment and Development was beyond the Committee's scope. The most that the Committee should attempt was to indicate the importance of participation by women in all matters relating to protection of the environment. The view that overpopulation was a major environmental factor was not shared by all; many countries held the view that the deterioration in the environment had been caused by unrestrained industrialization and economic growth. Such a discussion could go on at length and take up the Committee's time; the meeting should suspend so as to enable the Working Groups to carry on with their work.

4. The CHAIRPERSON said that the question of the Conference on Environment and Development could be dealt with in the Working Groups. The Committee had much more central issues, namely, those relating to implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, many aspects of which had not yet been broached. She suggested that the Committee should suspend in order to allow the Working Groups to convene.

The meeting was suspended at 3.25 p.m. and resumed at 5.20 p.m.

5. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Chairpersons of Working Groups I and II to brief the Committee.

6. Ms. BERNARD, reporting on behalf of Working Group I, said that the Group had considered the number of reports that could be taken up next year, which would depend on the length of the Committee's session in 1993. It was intended to request an extended session or an additional session. The number and length of the Committee's sessions would also affect the scheduling of the work of the pre-session working group. It had been proposed in Working

(Ms. Bernard)

Group I that the pre-session working group should concentrate in 1993 on outstanding initial reports and certain articles of the Convention, and that the Committee should determine the composition of the pre-session working group for 1993. Working Group I had also concluded that the practice of providing summaries of the Committee's deliberations on reports of States parties as guidance for the States parties in question should continue.

7. Ms. OESER asked whether it had been decided which reports of States parties would be considered in 1993.

8. Ms. BERNARD said it had been suggested that four initial and five periodic reports could be accommodated in a two-week session, or eight initial and six periodic reports in a three-week session. The countries in question had already been selected pending finalization of the session details.

9. The CHAIRPERSON suggested that the regional groups might wish to suggest members and alternates for the pre-session working group.

10. Ms. CORTI said that it would be inopportune for the current members of the Committee to pronounce themselves on that question since many of them were about to end their terms of office.

11. Ms. BERNARD said that a decision obviously had to be made before the following session. Given the evident difficulties it might be advisable for the Chairperson to propose a list of members for the pre-session working group, to include a representative of each regional group.

12. Ms. EVATT said that experience in the pre-session working group represented one of the best contributions that members could make to the work of the Committee, and all members should serve on it at the earliest opportunity.

13. Reporting on behalf of Working Group II, she said that the Working Group had considered the question of violence, the secretariat's analysis of article 6, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the Expert Group Meeting on Violence against Women. In particular, the question had arisen whether article 6 should be considered by itself or in conjunction with other issues relating to violence. In that connection the Working Group had determined that consideration of questions relating to violence was a priority. The Group had considered the issue of individual acts of violence and their relationship to underlying "structural" violence. Working Group II now faced the problem of completing its work in the remaining time available to it at the current session.

14. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee would have to consider the kind of reports that it wished to submit to the World Conference on Human Rights, to be held in 1993, and to the World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995. Since the reports would be prepared by a consultant, the Committee would have

(The Chairperson)

to provide guidelines for their preparation. The Committee's contribution to the World Conference on Women could deal with the Committee's analysis of country reports, its interpretation and definition of the various articles of the Convention, or ways and means of improving the implementation of the Convention.

15. She inquired whether Working Group II intended to discuss any additional articles of the Convention at the current session.

16. Ms. EVATT said that, at its current session, Working Group II would have to limit itself to the consideration of the issue of violence.

17. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING said that the Committee should endeavour to interpret and define a number of articles of the Convention in time for the World Conference on Women in 1995. To that end, the Committee should devote its special session in 1993 to the interpretation of articles. It was necessary for the Committee to have a set of interpretations of the articles so that new members of the Committee would have a clear idea of the meaning of each article.

18. The CHAIRPERSON said that it was not enough to devote a special session to the interpretation of articles of the Convention. Preparatory work must be carried out prior to that session, and she suggested that the Committee ask the secretariat to prepare a document setting out the basic elements of each article. Non-governmental organizations could also contribute to that effort.

19. Ms. GONZALEZ-MARTINEZ said that the Committee must proceed expeditiously if it intended to contribute to the World Conference on Human Rights. In that regard, the Committee must provide guidelines to enable the secretariat to draft a report based on the consideration of the issue of violence in Working Group II. At the next session of the Committee, the Secretariat's draft would be issued as a document and submitted to the World Conference on Human Rights.

20. Ms. ILIĆ said that, while she believed that Ms. Schopp-Schilling's proposal was very good, she doubted whether the Committee would be allowed to devote an entire session to an in-depth study of articles of the Convention. Perhaps the Committee should request an extra session to deal with its backlog of initial country reports.

21. As a member of Working Group I, she felt left out of the substantive discussion of the articles of the Convention. It was not fair that only one half or two thirds of the Committee should be engaged in that exercise; the entire Committee should be allowed to participate.

22. The CHAIRPERSON said that perhaps the Committee could use Ms. Ilić's argument to convince the Economic and Social Council to allow the Committee to hold a special session.

23. The Committee must find a way to enable the members of Working Group I to attend the meetings of Working Group II. Perhaps the Working Groups could meet at different times.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.